

Message Text

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ACTION SMI-01

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7095

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FOR SMI

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TPHY OSCI EG

SUBJ: SMITHSONIAN/SFCP - GRANT FR4-60103 "STUDY AND EXHIBITION OF
WISSA-WASSEF TAPESTRIES FROM EGYPT"

SUMMARY: I PROCESS MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR SHIPMENT OF WISSA
WASSEF TAPESTRIES AND IN COLLECTING COLLATERAL EXHIBITION, RON
GOODMAN HAS RUN INTO FOLLOWING PROBLEMS WHICH NEED RESOLUTION IN
WASHINGTON BETWEEN SMITHSONIAN AND EXXON. EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT
SMITHSONIAN SEEK TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS AND COMMUNICATE GUIDANCE TO
GOODMAN BY CABLE THROUGH STATE FACILITIES.

1. HEDLUND'S LETTER TO WISSA WASSEF DATED JUNE 18, 1973, WHICH
SHOWS CARBON COPY SENT TO SCHMERTZ IS BASICALLY ONLY COMMUNICATION
WHICH WISSA HAS REGARDING THE PREPARATION AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR
THE EXHIBIT. HIS INTERPRETATION OF THAT LETTER IS IN THE BROADEST
SENSE, E.E., THAT THERE WILL BE A LARGE PICTORIAL CATALOGUE, AND
A VARIETY OF POSTERS, THAT WISSA WASSEF, HIS WIFE, DAUGHTER AND
TWO CHILD WEAVERS WILL BE SENT TO THE UNITED STATES AT EXXON'S
EXPENSE AND THAT THE TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER COSTS OF THE EX-
HIBITION, INCLUDING INSURANCE WILL BE BORNE BY EXXON. AS GOODMAN
POINTS OUT, THIS IS LIKELY TO RUN CONSIDERABLY BEYOND PRESENT
BUDGET IF THESE ARE INDEED THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT. AS HE UNDER-
STOOD IN WASHINGTON, AND NEITHER HE NOR THOSE WITH WHOM HE CON-
SULTED IN SITES HAD EVER SEEN THIS LETTER, THE ONLY EXPENSES
COVERED WERE TO BE THE TRAVEL OF THE WEAVERS TO THE UNITED STATES
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AND THE PRINTING OF SEVERAL SINGLE SHEET CATALOGUE POSTERS.

REQUESTED ACTION:

TO DEFINE EXACTLY THE TERMS OF THE EXHIBITION AND TO BE SURE
REALISTIC FUNDING AVAILABLE.

2. ACCORDING TO GOODMAN'S UNDERSTANDING,THE TAPESTRIES AND THE
COLLATERAL COLLECTION ARE TO BE IN THE UNITED STATES A TOTAL OF
TWO TO THREE YEARS. THIS POSES SOME PROBLEM VIS-A-VIS WISSA
WASSEF AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE GOE REQUIRES A
PERMIT FOR THE TAPESTRIES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE COUNTRY AND HAVE
SAID THEY WILL NOT APPROVE A TIME LIMIT OF MORE THAN SIX MONTHS.
THE GOE BELIEVES THESE WORKS OF ART TO BE A NATIONAL TREASURE AND
THEREFORE NATURALLY WANTS A GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE SOLD
OR OTHERWISE DISPOSED OF ONCE THEY ARE ABROAD. FOR THIS REASON
EMBASSY FEELS A BIT UNEASY ABOUT THE RETURN OF THE TAPESTRIES;
SMITHSONIAN WILL NOTICE IN THE HEDLUND LETTER THERE IS AN OFFER
TO HELP SELL THE TAPESTRIES. WHILE EMBASSY'S RECENT CONTACTS WITH
WISSA WASSEF TEND TO CONFIRM OUR JUDGEMENT THAT WISSA HIMSELF IS
NOT INTERESTED IN SELLING THE TAPESTRIES, IT IS OUR OPINION THAT
IF THE TAPESTRIES ARE TO REMAIN IN THE US FOR A LONGER PERIOD
THAN SIX MONTHS, IT WILL TAKE A GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT AGREE-
MENT TO GET THEM OUT OF EGYPT AND RETURNED TO WISSA WASSEF.
REQUESTED ACTION: TO DETERMINE UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES THE TAPESTRIES
ARE TO BE IN THE UNITED STATES, FOR HOW LONG AND UNDER WHAT
CONDITIONS.

3. ACCORDING TO GOODMAN, HIS GRANT OF 4,500 DOLLARS WILL NOT BE
ENOUGH TO COVER LIVING EXPENSES, NECESSARY ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT
HE NEEDS HERE IN CAIRO AND THE PURCHASE OF THE COLLATERAL COLL-
ECTION. HE CLAIMS HE WILL NEED AT LEAST A MONTH'S EXTENSION ON
HIS TIME GRANT AND THAT HE WILL NEED FROM 10,000 TO 20,000
DOLLARS TO GATHER THE COLLATERAL COLLECTION. REQUESTED ACTION: TO
DECIDE THE SCOPE OF THE COLLATERAL COLLECTION AND PROVIDE GOODMAN
WITH WHATEVER FUNDS HE NEEDS TO FINISH THE JOB ASSIGNED TO HIM.

5. GOODMAN SPECIFICALLY IN NEED OF 5,400 HEAT SEAL SLIDE MOUNTS
FOR HIS SLIDES. HE CAN GET THE DEVELOPING DONE LOCALLY.

6. GOODMAN COMPLAINING TO US THAT HE HAS WRITTEN REPEATED TO
SITES AND HAS NOT GOTTEN ANSWERS TO HIS QUESTIONS (ABOUT POSTERS,
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BROCHURES, CATALOGUES AND SLIDE MOUNTS.) AFTER BASIC DECISIONS
MADE REGARDING THE ABOVE SCOPE AND TERMS OF THE EXHIBITION THERE
ARE SEVERAL DETAILS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WILL NEED TO BE
IRONED OUT, AND WHICH WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE.
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